

Tears dripped from my chin onto the waxed, wooden floor as I watched the nasty smile on his face. I hated Uncle Charles and I hated myself. I wiped my face with a cold rag in the bathroom and asked him to take me home. I did not tell my mamma when I got to the house, and I did not tell Mamma Jesse. I felt guilty and dirty and did not want anyone to know what had happened. I tried to forget about it during the next few days, but I could not stop blaming myself and I could not force Uncle Charles or the Easter picture out of my mind.

I sat up in my chair and tried to remember what had happened to that picture. Though I did not want it, I wondered who had it. I picked up the bent picture from my lap and thought about it again.

After I had left the yard with Aunt Johnnie and Mamma Jesse still sitting on the porch, I walked down the road toward the lake and saw everybody laughing with Little Carol's uncle snapping their pictures. I dried my face with the sleeve of my dress and stood watching them. Junebug pulled the little boat up to the bank of the lake and called me to come and get in with everyone else. I had been so eager to take the pictures before, but I did not want to anymore. I stepped into the boat and Junebug and Nancy pushed us off the bank with fallen willow branches. Everybody was arguing over what we should do for our picture, and I listened to them. Nancy said we should make faces at the camera, then Junebug told us all to shake our hands in the air and scream. When the bulb flashed from the top of the black camera, everyone around me was laughing and shaking their arms, while I was sitting with my head bowed.

The kids had asked me why I looked so sad on the picture and was not having fun like the other children. I told them I did not like to take pictures and had not wanted to take that one. There were not many pictures of me in any of the old albums and most were of me after I was married. There were only five pictures of me as a child, including the boat picture, and I never smiled in any of them.

This is the last of a series of poems written about Richard Brautigan, my favorite author and poet, who killed himself in September of 1984.

Richard Brautigan Meets Joe DiMaggio

by Jay Lesandrini

Just like Joe

DiMaggio's

I wish I had your

bubble-gum card.

A professor of mine once

met you at a gathering

of poets and musicians.

He, is Joe DiMaggio

to me.